

1 We claim:

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3 1. A method for managing sophisticated office machines in an environment having  
4 consumers and vendors comprising the steps of:

5 associating a needs analyzer with the environment,

6 associating a vendor quote requester with the environment,

7 wherein the needs analyzer is software coupled to the vendor quote requester, the

8 needs analyzer determines a list of needs of a consumer, and the vendor quote

9 requester prepares input screens reflecting the list of needs.

10 2. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

11 associating a vendor monitor with the environment,

12 wherein vendor performance parameters are measured.

13 3. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

14 associating a quote response analyzer with the environment,

15 wherein a plurality of vendor responses are collected for viewing or further

16 processing.

17 4. The method of claim 2 further comprising the steps of:

18 associating a vendor management module with the environment, associating an

19 administrative module with the environment,

20 wherein the vendor management monitor includes the vendor monitor,

21 wherein the vendor management module is coupled to the administrative module.

22 5. The method of claim 2 further comprising the steps of:

23 associating a quote response analyzer with the environment,

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- 1            wherein a plurality of vendor responses are collected for viewing or further
- 2            processing.
- 3    6. The method of claim 4 wherein the administrative module receives performance
- 4            parameters from the vendor management module and manages the vendor based on
- 5            the performance parameters.
- 6    7. The method of claim 4 further comprising the steps of:
- 7            associating a quote response analyzer with the environment,
- 8            wherein a plurality of vendor responses are collected for viewing or further
- 9            processing.
- 10   8. The method of claim 4 further comprising the steps of:
- 11           associating a contract writer with the environment,
- 12           associating a vendor manager with the management module,
- 13           associating a productivity tracker with the management module,
- 14           associating a cost tracker with the management module,
- 15           associating a realtime management reporter with the management module,
- 16           wherein the contract writer produces a suitable contract based on an accepted
- 17           quotation, the vendor manager is deployed to contact a vendor when a problem
- 18           arises, the productivity tracker and the cost tracker maintain useful statistics that
- 19           can be reported on demand by the realtime management reporter.
- 20   9. The method of claim 6 further comprising the steps of:
- 21           associating a quote response analyzer with the environment,
- 22           wherein a plurality of vendor responses are collected for viewing or further
- 23           processing.

- 1 10. The method of claim 6 further comprising the steps of:  
2 associating a contract writer with the environment,  
3 associating a vendor manager with the management module,  
4 associating a productivity tracker with the management module,  
5 associating a cost tracker with the management module,  
6 associating a realtime management reporter with the management module,  
7 wherein the contract writer produces a suitable contract based on an accepted  
8 quotation, the vendor manager is deployed to contact a vendor when a problem  
9 arises, the productivity tracker and the cost tracker maintain useful statistics that  
10 can be reported on demand by the realtime management reporter.
- 11 11. The method of claim 9 further comprising the steps of:  
12 associating an acquisition module with the environment,  
13 wherein the acquisition module is coupled to the administrative module.
- 14 12. The method of claim 9 wherein the acquisition module includes the needs analyzer,  
15 the vendor quote requester, and the quote response analyzer.
- 16 13. The method of claim 9 further comprising the steps of:  
17 associating a contract writer with the environment,  
18 associating a vendor manager with the management module,  
19 associating a productivity tracker with the management module,  
20 associating a cost tracker with the management module,  
21 associating a realtime management reporter with the management module,  
22 wherein the contract writer produces a suitable contract based on an accepted  
23 quotation, the vendor manager is deployed to contact a vendor when a problem

1           arises, the productivity tracker and the cost tracker maintain useful statistics that  
2           can be reported on demand by the realtime management reporter.

3   14. The method of claim 11 wherein the acquisition module includes the needs analyzer,  
4           the vendor quote requester, and the quote response analyzer.

5   15. The method of claim 11 further comprising the steps of:

6           associating a contract writer with the environment,

7           associating a vendor manager with the management module,

8           associating a productivity tracker with the management module,

9           associating a cost tracker with the management module,

10          associating a realtime management reporter with the management module,

11          wherein the contract writer produces a suitable contract based on an accepted

12          quotation, the vendor manager is deployed to contact a vendor when a problem

13          arises, the productivity tracker and the cost tracker maintain useful statistics that

14          can be reported on demand by the realtime management reporter.

15   16. The method of claim 14 further comprising the steps of:

16          associating a contract writer with the environment,

17          associating a vendor manager with the management module,

18          associating a productivity tracker with the management module,

19          associating a cost tracker with the management module,

20          associating a realtime management reporter with the management module,

21          wherein the contract writer produces a suitable contract based on an accepted

22          quotation, the vendor manager is deployed to contact a vendor when a problem

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1           arises, the productivity tracker and the cost tracker maintain useful statistics that  
2           can be reported on demand by the realtime management reporter.

3    17. A system for managing sophisticated office machines in an environment having  
4           consumers and vendors comprising:

5           a needs analyzer,

6           a vendor quote requester,

7           wherein the needs analyzer is software coupled to the vendor quote requester, the

8           needs analyzer determines a list of needs of a consumer, and the vendor quote

9           requester prepares input screens reflecting the list of needs.

10   18. The system of claim 17 further comprising:

11           a vendor monitor,

12           wherein vendor performance parameters are measured.

13   19. The system of claim 17 further comprising:

14           a quote response analyzer,

15           wherein a plurality of vendor responses are collected for viewing or further

16           processing.

17   20. The system of claim 18 further comprising:

18           a vendor management module, an administrative module,

19           wherein the vendor management monitor includes the vendor monitor,

20           wherein the vendor management module is coupled to the administrative module.

21   21. The system of claim 18 further comprising:

22           a quote response analyzer,

1 wherein a plurality of vendor responses are collected for viewing or further  
2 processing.

3 22. The system of claim 20 wherein the administrative module receives performance  
4 parameters from the vendor management module and manages the vendor based on  
5 the performance parameters.

6 23. The system of claim 20 further comprising:

7 a quote response analyzer,

8 wherein a plurality of vendor responses are collected for viewing or further  
9 processing.

10 24. The system of claim 20 further comprising:

11 a contract writer,

12 a vendor manager,

13 a productivity tracker,

14 a cost tracker,

15 a realtime management reporter,

16 wherein the contract writer produces a suitable contract based on an accepted  
17 quotation, the vendor manager is deployed to contact a vendor when a problem  
18 arises, the productivity tracker and the cost tracker maintain useful statistics that  
19 can be reported on demand by the realime management reporter.

20 25. The system of claim 22 further comprising:

21 a quote response analyzer,

22 wherein a plurality of vendor responses are collected for viewing or further  
23 processing.

1 26. The system of claim 22 further comprising:

2 a contract writer,

3 a vendor manager,

4 a productivity tracker,

5 a cost tracker,

6 a realtime management reporter,

7 wherein the contract writer produces a suitable contract based on an accepted

8 quotation, the vendor manager is deployed to contact a vendor when a problem

9 arises, the productivity tracker and the cost tracker maintain useful statistics that

10 can be reported on demand by the realtime management reporter.

11 27. The system of claim 25 further comprising:

12 an acquisition module,

13 wherein the acquisition module is coupled to the administrative module.

14 28. The system of claim 25 wherein the acquisition module includes the needs analyzer,

15 the vendor quote requester, and the quote response analyzer.

16 29. The system of claim 25 further comprising:

17 a contract writer,

18 a vendor manager,

19 a productivity tracker,

20 a cost tracker,

21 a realtime management reporter,

22 wherein the contract writer produces a suitable contract based on an accepted

23 quotation, the vendor manager is deployed to contact a vendor when a problem

1           arises, the productivity tracker and the cost tracker maintain useful statistics that  
2           can be reported on demand by the realtime management reporter.

3   30. The system of claim 27 wherein the acquisition module includes the needs analyzer,  
4           the vendor quote requester, and the quote response analyzer.

5   31. The system of claim 27 further comprising:

6           a contract writer,

7           a vendor manager,

8           a productivity tracker,

9           a cost tracker,

10          a realtime management reporter,

11          wherein the contract writer produces a suitable contract based on an accepted

12          quotation, the vendor manager is deployed to contact a vendor when a problem

13          arises, the productivity tracker and the cost tracker maintain useful statistics that

14          can be reported on demand by the realtime management reporter.

15   32. The system of claim 30 further comprising:

16          a contract writer,

17          a vendor manager,

18          a productivity tracker,

19          a cost tracker,

20          a realtime management reporter,

21          wherein the contract writer produces a suitable contract based on an accepted

22          quotation, the vendor manager is deployed to contact a vendor when a problem



1           arises, the productivity tracker and the cost tracker maintain useful statistics that  
2           can be reported on demand by the realtime management reporter.

3    33. A method for managing sophisticated office machines in an environment comprising  
4           the steps of:

5           associating a consumer access point with the environment,  
6           associating an administrator access point with the environment.  
7           associating a vendor access point with the environment,  
8           wherein the administrator manages the vendor on behalf of the consumer.

9    34. The method of claim 33 wherein consumer requirements are received by the system  
10          at the consumer access point and vendor product quotations are received by the  
11          system at the vendor access point.

12   35. The method of claim 33 wherein an administrator uses the administrator access point  
13          to monitor the sophisticated office equipment.

14   36. The method of claim 33 wherein the environment is a networked business enterprise.

15   37. The method of claim 34 wherein an administrator uses the administrator access point  
16          to monitor the sophisticated office equipment.

17   38. The method of claim 34 wherein the environment is a networked business enterprise.

18   39. The method of claim 37 wherein the environment is a networked business enterprise.

19   40. A system for managing sophisticated office machines in an environment comprising:  
20          a consumer access point,  
21          an administrator access point.  
22          a vendor access point,  
23          wherein the administrator manages the vendor on behalf of the consumer.

- 1 41. The system of claim 40 wherein consumer requirements are received by the system
- 2 at the consumer access point and vendor product quotations are received by the
- 3 system at the vendor access point.
- 4 42. The system of claim 40 wherein an administrator uses the administrator access point
- 5 to monitor the sophisticated office equipment.
- 6 43. The system of claim 40 wherein the environment is a networked business enterprise.
- 7 44. The system of claim 41 wherein an administrator uses the administrator access point
- 8 to monitor the sophisticated office equipment.
- 9 45. The system of claim 41 wherein the environment is a networked business enterprise.
- 10 46. The system of claim 44 wherein the environment is a networked business enterprise.